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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001696

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [US](#) [IR](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: PM OF IRAQI KURDISTAN DISCOUNTS NATIONAL  
RECONCILIATION AND CALLS FOR U.S. TALKS WITH IRAN AND SYRIA

Classified By: James Yellin for reason 1.4 (d).

#### SUMMARY

¶1. (C) On May 17 outgoing Kurdistan Regional Coordinator Yellin, accompanied by incoming Acting Regional Coordinator Patterson, paid a farewell call on Nechirvan Barzani, the Prime Minister of the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Barzani said that Iraqi Sunni and Shia Arabs will never reconcile. He added that the US must find a solution other than a strong central government and must reach an understanding with Iran and Syria over Iraq.

¶2. (C) Asked about his recent trip to Iran, Barzani replied the Iranians understand they need to improve relations with the United States. According to Barzani, the Iranians know that the Sunni Arab countries are against the present Iraqi government and that only two countries support it: Iran and the United States. Barzani added, in apparent contradiction, that the Iranians would "love for the US to attack them" because it would greatly increase popular support for the Iranian government. END SUMMARY.

#### NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

¶3. (C) Asked about Iraqi national reconciliation, Barzani said, "It is over." According to Barzani:

-- The Sunni and Shia Arabs in Iraq will never reconcile. Each side wants to settle scores and have the upper hand. This is not the fault of the United States. It is simply a reality.

-- The surge in U.S. troops may make a temporary difference, but as soon as they leave, things will return to the status quo ante.

-- The US "must be serious about finding a solution other than a strong central government," because there is no possibility of building such a government.

¶4. (C) Kurdistan "will continue to be part of Iraq," Barzani said. It is not in the interest of Kurdistan to be independent, he explained, but there must be a federalized system, not a highly centralized state.

#### MEETINGS IN IRAN

¶5. (C) In addition, according to Barzani, the United States must come to an understanding with Iran about Iraq.

¶6. (C) Asked about his visit to Iran earlier in May, Barzani said that he met with President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, former President Ali Rafsanjani, Quds Force Commander Qassem Suleimani, National Security Council head Ali Larijani,

Foreign Minister Manuchehr Motaki, and Interior Minister Mostafa Pur-Mohammadi.

¶7. (C) Barzani described Larijani as very close to Supreme Leader Ali Khameni, characterized Larijani and Suleimani as the most important Iranian officials dealing with Iraq, and called Motaki a "zero."

#### AGREEMENTS BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQI KURDISTAN

¶8. (C) According to Barzani, the two sides:

-- Agreed to form a joint committee to deal with security issues.

-- Concluded economic agreements on border transit;

-- Agreed that seventeen percent of the one billion dollar loan made by Iran to Iraq will go to the Kurdistan Region.

¶9. (C) According to Barzani, the Iranians complained that the Turks are able to invest in Iraq, but not the Iranians. Barzani replied to the Iranians that they are welcome to invest in Iraq, but that Iranian companies come to gather intelligence, the Turks come for business.

#### IRANIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES

¶10. (C) The Iranians, Barzani told us, want to talk with the United States and think that if they reach an agreement with the United States, the present Iraqi government could stay in power. He explained that:

-- The Iranians understand that they need to improve relations with the United States because they know that Syria

BAGHDAD 00001696 002 OF 002

is preparing to improve relations with the next U.S. administration and that Iran therefore risks isolation.

-- Iran knows that Sunni Arab countries are against the present Iraqi government and that only two countries support it: Iran and the United States.

-- Iran fears that the Sunnis will take over the government if the U.S. withdraws from Iraq, and that the U.S. administration after that of President Bush might agree to a new Iraqi government.

#### IRANIAN RELATIONS WITH THE US

¶11. (C) Barzani told Ahmadinejad that Iranian policy towards the United States is "wrong," and that neither the United States nor Israel is planning to attack Iran.

¶12. (C) Barzani remarked to us that the Iranians would "love for the US to attack them." An attack, he explained, would unify the Iranian people, greatly increase popular support for the Iranian government, and allow it to remain in power for another twenty years.

¶13. (C) Barzani also told Ahmadinejad that as a result of the "wrong" policies of Iran, the Arab countries no longer see Israel as their enemy; instead, they see Iran.

¶14. (C) Barzani asked Ahmadinejad, What is your problem with Israel? He told Ahmadinejad that the Kurdistan Region wants to have relations with every country, including Israel. If the government of Iraq establishes diplomatic relations with Israel, he told us, the Kurdistan Region will authorize Israel to open a consulate.

#### IRANIAN RELATIONS WITH THE KURDISTAN REGION

¶15. (C) Barzani boasted to us that his visit to Iran was the first time that he was received as a Prime Minister by any

state in the Middle East. Iran, he said, thus recognized the special status that the Kurdistan Region has in Iraq.

¶16. (C) The Iranians, Barzani recounted, were very worried by the recent visit of KRG President Massoud Barzani to Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Nechirvan Barzani assured the Iranians that the KRG is not trying to build an anti-Iranian front. On the contrary, he told the Iranians, the KRG wants to have good relations with Iran. He expressed the hope to Ahmadinejad that he would visit Iraq and would include the Kurdistan Region in such a visit.

¶17. (C) The Iranians expressed displeasure to Nechirvan Barzani that KRG had united the two competing factions of the Iranian opposition group known as the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI). Barzani replied to the Iranians that the KDPI has accepted not to conduct cross-border operations and that KRG policy is not to help any group to act against the neighbors of the KRG.

#### COMMENTS

¶18. (C) The overwhelming majority of Kurds, including the leaders of the KRG, would prefer independence for the Kurdistan Region. The leaders of the KRG, however, recognize that this is not a practical alternative at this juncture.

¶19. (C) The pessimistic assessment of the prospects of Iraqi national reconciliation may well represent his real views. They also represent, we suspect, a hope. He probably sees disorder in the rest of Iraq as advancing his objectives of promoting a political system that would maximize autonomy for the Kurdistan Region, and of convincing the United States to maximize support for the Kurdistan Region as a bastion of stability within Iraq.

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